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FRENCHTOWN WINDOW
By Luis Graner

—On Exhibition at Marshall Field & Co.'s Galleries

Exhibitions at the Chicago Galleries

By EVELYN MARIE STUART

AMONG the most interesting exhibitions of the season is that of twenty-eight canvases by Luis Graner which will be seen at Marshall Field & Company's for the next three weeks. Mr. Graner is generally referred to as a Spanish artist although he studied in Paris where he was long a resident and a noted exhibitor in the Salon. He is Spanish by birth and a citizen of the world, having traveled extensively and being well known both in Europe and the United States. He might indeed be classed as an American, for the past seven years of his life have been spent in this country, and he is most enthusiastic over our native scenery and types.

Mr. Graner is one of the few painters exhibiting in this country who are also familiar with South America, having painted in Rio de Janeiro and other parts of Brazil and the Argentine. He will probably go down to fame among us as "the painter of New Orleans," for he has presented its Creole types and quaint old world architecture with sympathy, understanding and immeasurable charm. It has no doubt often occurred to many of us that this far southern city ought to be quite particularly paintable and to wonder why it has not been the mecca of American artists. Luis Graner substantiates the surmise as to the pictorial aspect of New Orleans and per-



LUNCH HOUR, IN SHIPYARD, BAYOU ST. JOHN
By Luis Graner

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haps explains its apparent neglect by other men. For here we have a man of Latin blood painting a city and a people which are essentially Latin even though located in America. New Orleans is perhaps the most foreign of all our great cities just as it is the most romantic. Here is to be found a life more like that of the old world and traditions and temperaments similar to those of the Latin countries, so that we do not wonder when a Spanish artist finds himself most at home in this atmosphere.

Mr. Graner has, however, painted many portions of our country and always intelligently and delightfully; he has fallen under the spell of the Hudson River country, whose charms inspired our first great school of American art, and he has found themes of interest among the mountains of Colorado. The Hudson fascinated him with its changefulness as it was never quite the same, but he has usually preferred it in the early morning, wrapped in mist or bright in the clear sun of the new day.

In Colorado he found nothing suited to his muse in the characteristic mountain scenery whose bold peaks and deep chasms are the delight of more dramatic painters, to say nothing of the photographer who prepares the tourist post cards. From this obvious and overwhelming gorgeousness of nature he shrank abashed; but he has given us a most entrancing and poetic studies of the gentle slope at the foot of a hill, some quiet vista along a stretch of stream in a peaceful valley, or the mysteriously mist-shrouded tree-tops of hill and valley under

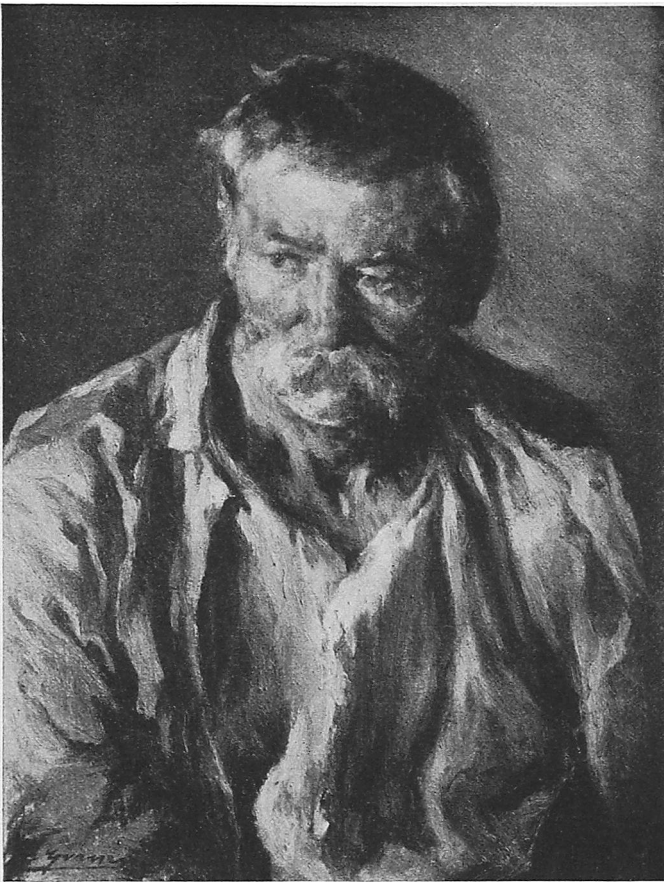


THE SUN-BONNET, LOUISIANA TYPE
By Luis Graner

—On Exhibition at Marshall Field & Co.'s Galleries

the witchery of moonlight. From this it will be seen that he is a lyric rather than an epic poet of the brush, and that his study of nature is intensive, leading to an appreciation of her most subtle beauties, and for this reason his works are ever delightful and restful, possessing both the contemplative and the decorative qualities.

His pictures of New Orleans life will, however, recommend him most strongly to the American public by reason of their vivacity and freshness, and because it is by these that he is most likely to be known. They have much the same flavor that has made many European artists' work relished in America—a homely air of life's simple



THE WORKINGMAN

By Luis Graner

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duties simply done, of old-fashioned, almost primitive, conditions of working and living. In these studies of New Orleans' life Luis Graner has indeed reached the heights and displayed those qualities which mark the master.

He is, however, a man of many moods and therefore always interesting. Life attracts him at various points and in many aspects. His varying themes are always handled in appropriately varying manners and his subjects are lighted in accordance with their suggestion. New Orleans courtyards, interiors and portrait types he paints in a lower key, richer color and light application of pigment than are to be observed in his landscape studies. The night

life of carbarets, with their brutal and brilliant contrasts, he has presented in shadowy effects with contrasts of lamplight that seem well attuned to the character of the theme. His studies of the beautiful dignity of the lives of working people are presented in the full light of those hours during which their lives and their duties move forward.

His portraits of Creole types are worthy the traditions of the country which produced a Velasquez, and in these works we are constantly reminded of all that is best in the art of the Spanish school. Here indeed we feel the influence of his blood and training and of age-long devotion to great ideals, of an innate appreciation of rich color and dramatic suggestion, the grace of romance thrown over the common or sordid side of life. We reproduce herewith two of the best of his Creole studies, an

indolent loungeur picked up in the park and a stout, cheerful woman wearing a sunbonnet which is the characteristic headdress of the poor in this city.

In the study of the man there is some beautiful drawing to be noted in the careless fall of the folds of his shabby coat and shirt. The color throughout this picture is delightful, soft yet brilliant with the lovely blues of faded and weatherworn things. In the portrait of the woman we observe splendid values and a vivacity of expression that seems to bring us in touch with the very life of the town. The other studies of great interest were that of a stout old woman, rosy and cheerful in the light of a fireplace, and a dark rough man resting



OLD SPANISH HOUSE AT NEW ORLEANS
By Luis Graner

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upon a bench in the corner of some shabby room, the cigarette between his lips giving a touch of rosy light among the shadows. Mr. Graner confesses to loving the process of painting in the shadows and relates that his shadowy pictures achieved his greatest successes in the Paris salon.

In Berlin he was known as the night painter and it must be confessed that his handling of shadowy and nocturnal themes is characteristic and impressive. However, he loves to paint every variety of subjects and light conditions, feeling that in the constant grappling with new problems an artist has better opportunity for growth and advancement.

Now and again he gives us an outdoor figure study that is as fresh in color and as full of life and atmosphere as any of the

greatest achievements of the modern school.

Such is "Washday" with the rosy, rugged woman and her pink and sturdy baby, against a background of white linens heavy and wet upon the line, and the sappy greens of mid-morning in early summer. There is a something clean and moist and fresh about this picture which makes one feel that it is good to be alive and busy, that there is a certain beauty about usefulness and a grace in the commonest occupations of life. The baby in the foreground is a most remarkable study, a faithful impression of infantile appeal. Color and sentiment in this picture are alike cheerful, wholesome and refreshing.

"Lunch Hour, Shipyard, Bayou Saint John" is another supremely good picture, full of the joy of living and the satisfaction

of work well done. There is something infinitely lovable about this artist's appreciation of and sympathy with the useful folk of simple tastes and humble lives, whose honest occupations and affections have the commanding dignity of the real. The wifely care that has provided good things for a hard workingman, including the companionship of herself and her child during his leisure hour, the father's love for and pride in his little one all appeal strongly to fundamental human impulses. The expression on the father's face is, indeed, the work of genius, a very beautiful thing well achieved, a soft radiance thrown over rugged features, tenderness shining, where we know strength and patience are more often the usual aspect. Another very fascinating touch is the sympathetic interest of the group of rough workmen to the left who view the happy picture with that gentle kindness and pleasure which is the universal tribute to the charms of the little child. In color this work is rich, mellow and harmonious, the grey of massive beams lighted by a warm noon-day sun which splashes the sandy earth with a gorgeous and glowing orange-rose, while, beyond, we catch a glimpse of green sea water and white foam.

There is indeed an unusually agreeable color quality about many of these New Orleans studies, particularly the woman in the window herewith illustrated. Of this and the courtyard scene a New Orleans correspondent writes:

"An entrancing 'window' is opened in another, still unframed. It is a woman of a New Orleans 'way downtown type. She leans in eloquent, idle, conversational good humor from a French window, one of those with the heavy green, wooden shutters. Nowhere in the world do you find such color as in those old wooden shutters of the French quarter. It is bluish green, seasoned by many repaintings, a lovely, timeless, nameless shade, old and of as many elements as the color of the sea. This he has painted for the pure joy of painting the light and tones of that window, the happy harmony between the life within and its encasement. Of architectural New Orleans he has chosen for

one thing a courtyard, one of the old square types which bear not a vestige of the days of grand regime, but which are possessed by a physically mellow type of Italian life, a people who manage to suggest ease even when they are working. Life is all within the court—you get no sense of outdoors, but of a contentment that fills its own block in the great mosaic of distinctions."

It is not New Orleans and its people alone, however, that have moved this artist to entrance us with his observations, for he is the poet of lovely nature and the broad world as well as of the teeming town. His river pictures are remarkable for the charm of their simplicity. Big, flat masses, sweeping lines, quiet color unite in evening themes along the river bank that would have allured Whistler. In his nature and landscape studies there is never too much intellectuality and the dramatic is forgotten for the reposeful and serene. One could live with these pictures indefinitely and always find them soothing and restful.

Again he displays a sense of the decorative that amazes and thrills. Some of his little studies of water seen through drooping willow branches are like the masterpieces of Japanese nature painters, telling fragments of beauty from the great tapestry of outdoors. Often too, they represent months of study and effort, a single finished work, produced only after innumerable sketches have been discarded,—as prize chrysanthemums are grown by the nipping of all but one promising bud.

In this exhibition are a number of Mr. Graner's latest canvases, things which have never been exhibited before. Among them are some lovely landscapes from along the Hudson and in Colorado. The former are easily distinguishable through the sappy, luscious quality of the fresh green foliage, the opal-tinted greys of river mists and the flat faraway of distant banks. The Colorado themes are bolder and deeper in color with more of incident in the landscape. There is always a detached quality about Mr. Graner's landscapes however, a wrapt and contemplative feeling of one who is

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alone with nature. His morning riversides, green and bright in mist and dew and sun, are as fresh and sweet as the song of a thrush, and as well attuned to the heart that seeks its religion in nature worship.

In these canvases he applies his late method of painting in a heavier manner with a fat pigmentousness that produces depth and subtle gradation of fleeting tone. His method is always broad and loose enough to meet the best ideals of today, but in his portraits, interiors, etc., the paint itself is not so heavily applied as in his ventures with pure landscape. Always his pictures are lighted beautifully whether with the gold of the sun, the pale radiance of the moonlight or the flicker of firelight or lamps.

He has indeed achieved a triumph in one of his moonlight pictures, fit to rank with the best of Blakelocks. Never has the beauty, mystery and wizardry of moonlighted woods been better appreciated and realized on canvas, with a more supreme understanding of the decorative. It is a rhythmic and beautiful composition with the fullest measure of nocturnal loveliness.

The personal career of an artist is always a theme of interest and a New Orleans newspaper writer has told that of the man under consideration in the following prettily worded tale:

"How does a man learn to paint with this intense, yet free, nobility? Does he start as a boy? When the question was put Mr. Graner gave a glimpse over a youth filled with the strong, tragic romance of struggle. He had always a feeling for painting, but, as has been

so often the case with the genius, he had a family who did not understand. His mother did not like that he should be a painter, there was no substantiality in painting!

"Yet, in spite of objection, at twenty he entered the Academy of Barcelona. There were reproaches at home—'You are good for nothing,' they would say. 'But I do not reproach my mother,' said Graner, 'she was good—good woman; this was her belief for me, that is all.' Well, the boy would get up in the middle of the night to work and what other students did in four years, he did in two; that is, he took the four-year course in half that time. Work? He had so little money from home, so we would walk the long distance to the academy to save the five cents for more paper, for canvas—and color. And the reward came in the taking of the prize to study in Paris and Rome—a scholarship. There, in those sacred art centers, he girded his loins anew. He worked day and night, he economized and made the prize money cover double the time allotted, as he had made his own strength leap the years in his academy days. The first great success came in the taking of a prize offered by the queen mother—Alphonso's mother, at the Internationale Exhibition in Barcelona. This was the great beginning of his international recognition."

Luis Graner has always exhibited individually in America as, in this instance, at Marshall Field & Company's. His one-man shows have, however, been well commented upon by the metropolitan press and he is represented in some of the foremost of American private collections. All of this recognition he heartily deserves for he has held the mirror up to our own land and shown us how fair and ever fascinating it really can be in art.